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Ethnographic approach to multiple belongings in everyday school life

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This study explores a multitude of different belongings and non-belongings that are produced in everyday talk and practices in the context of Finnish public basic education. The study asks - what kind of belongings and non-belongings may be produced in the everyday school life and how are the social belongings and non-belongings produced in the everyday school life.

In this study, belonging is understood as a dynamic feeling of safety, familiarity and comfort which is always produced in relation to the environment. The theoretical framework is built on literature that sees belonging through perspectives of emotions, politics of belonging and intersectionality in a complex world that is in constant change.

Access to the everyday school life of first graders was sought through ethnographic 'hanging out' and ethnographic observation of the children in their educational settings. The main data consists of observations carried out during two school weeks. The analysis process of this study was inspired by Jackson and Mazzei (2012; 2017) who describe it as 'thinking with theory' and Maclure's (2013) hotspot analysis. Chosen parts of the generated data have been discussed in a dialogue with the theoretical framework in order to be able to see belonging and everyday school life in a different way.

The findings shed light on the multiple and intertwined dimensions of belonging. Through analysis, the research illuminates different often naturalized, and therefore considered nonpolitical, processes in which multiple belongings (and simultaneously non-belongings) are produced in the lives of children. I come to argue that social belongings are partly produced on the foundation of cultural, material and spatial routines of belonging, but they are not achieved through them.

The research may provide depth and insight to the contemporary academic discussion on belonging in school environment and simultaneously provide educators with an opportunity to reflect together the variety of practices in which belongings and non-belongings are produced in the fleeting moments of everyday school life.

Keywords: basic education, belonging, ethnography, school

Oulun yliopisto
Kasvatustieteiden tiedekunta
Etnografinen lähestymistapa moninaisiin kuulumisiin kouluarjessa (Anu Roiha)
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Tämä pro gradu –tutkielma tarkastelee lasten moninaisia kuulumisia ja kuulumattomuuksia, joita tuotetaan peruskoulun arjessa. Tutkimuksessa kysytään: millaisia monenlaisia kuulumisia ja kuulumattomuuksia kouluarjessa tuotetaan, ja miten sosiaalista kuulumista ja kuulumattomuutta kouluarjessa tuotetaan?

Tutkimuksessa kuuluminen ymmärretään dynaamisena turvallisuuden, tuttuuden ja mukavuuden tunteena, joka tuotetaan aina suhteessa ympäristöön. Tutkimuksen teoreettinen viitekehys rakentuu tunteiden, kuulumisen politiikan ja intersektionaalisuuden näkökulmien ympärille tässä monimutkaisessa ja jatkuvassa muutoksessa olevassa maailmassa.

Ekaluokkalaisten kouluarkeen sukellettiin ’etnografisen hengailun’ ja etnografisen osallistuvan havainnoinnin avulla. Aineisto tuotettiin havainnoimalla lapsia heidän kouluympäristössään kahden kouluviikon aikana. Analyysiprosessia innoittivat Jacksonin ja Mazzein (2012; 2017) teorian kanssa ajattelu ja Macluren (2013) hotspot-analyysi. Valittuja aineisto-otteita pohditaan kuulumiselle ominaisten piirteiden valossa, jotta kuuluminen ja kouluarki voitaisiin nähdä uusin silmin.

Tutkimuksen valossa kuulumisen ulottuvuudet näyttäytyvät moninaisina ja toisiinsa kietoutuneina. Analyysin kautta tutkimus osoittaa, että kuulumisen ulottuvuudet ovat jatkuvasti neuvottelujen alaisina luonnollistetuissa, ja siten epäpoliittisina nähdyissä, prosesseissa. Näiden havaintojen perusteella tutkimus väittää, että sosiaaliset kuulumiset tuotetaan osittain kulttuurisille, materiaalisille ja tilallisille kuulumisen rutiineille, ja vaikka sosiaalinen kuulumisen tuottaminen mahdollistetaan rakenteilla ja käytänteillä, sitä ei saavuteta niillä.

Tutkimus voi tuoda syvyyttä tämän hetkiseen keskusteluun kuulumisesta kouluympäristössä. Lisäksi se voi antaa kasvattajille mahdollisuuden pohtia sitä käytäntöjen kirjoa, jolla kuulumisia ja kuulumattomuuksia tuotetaan kouluarjen ohikiitävissä hetkissä.

Avainsanat: etnografia, peruskoulu, kuuluminen, yhteenkuuluvuus

Table of contents

1 Introduction

This study explores a multitude of different belongings and non-belongings that are produced in everyday talk and practices in the context of first graders in Finnish public basic education. Belonging is understood as a feeling of safety, familiarity and comfort, which is always produced in relation to the environment through different dynamics and power. In this research, this theoretical understanding of belonging as a complex phenomenon in a complex world has been plugged into the ethnographic observations of fleeting moments in school - as well as the other way around - with the aim to see the everyday school life in a different way.

This research process is of timely concern, because in Finnish as well as in international discourses one of the many contemporary challenges is the task of education with, and for, in various ways diverse pupils. Those discussions have been related to concepts like inclusion and participation as well as to social exclusion. In these discourses, I find it problematic that the challenge is often located in the diversity of individuals, more explicitly in some certain differences that are considered as more meaningful than others, such as learning ability, behavior, language or culture. Focusing especially on these certain differences implicitly suggests that the societies we live in and try to prepare children for, wouldn't themselves internally be highly diverse in these dimensions, as well as globally interconnected.

Despite our differences, we have also similarities. The belief that human beings are motivated to form and maintain strong interpersonal relationships and bonds, has a long history in philosophy, the human sciences and psychological theories (See e.g. Attachment theory, Ainsworth, 1988; Bowlby, 1969; Self-determination theory, Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier & Ryan 1991; Theory of wellbeing, Allardt, 1993; Ecological systems theory, Bronfenbrenner, 1973; Motivational hierarchy, Maslow, 1943). As belonging has been understood as something very significant for well-being, - even a basic human need (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) - belonging still remains topical after decades of research. Lately, since the end of 20th century the scientific discussion on belonging has greatly augmented and spread across a variety of disciplines, such as psychology, geography, social sciences, cultural studies and education, including a multiplicity of fields of study 'from citizenship to attachment theory, from personal identity to political philosophy' (Healy & Richardson, 2017, p. 7; Lähdesmäki, Saresma, Hiltunen, Jäntti, Sääskilahti, Vallius, & Ahvenjärvi, 2016, p. 9).

Within these fields a grand variety of concepts have been used to describe and measure the subjective, individual or personal dimension of belonging, which deals directly with person's subjective psychological experiences comprising of motions, emotions and affects. The concepts are found to be either closely linked to each other or they are used as synonyms. Some concepts that are used in the literature include: sense of belonging (e.g., Hagerty et al., 1992; 1996; Juvonen, 2006), [sense of] school belonging (e.g., Cemalcilar, 2010; Cortina & Smith-Darden, 2017; Goodenow, 1993; Goodenow & Grady, 1993; Roeser, Midgley, & Urdan, 1996; Allen, Kern, Vella-Brodrick, Hattie, & Waters, 2018; Arslan, 2018; Crouch, Keys & McMahon, 2014; Gillen-O'Neel & Fuligni, 2013; Uslu & Gizir, 2017), (school) relatedness (e.g., Hagerty, Lynch-Sauer, Patusky, Bouwsema, & Collier, 1992; Furrer & Skinner, 2003), school connectedness (Bond et al., 2007; Allen & Bowles, 2012), sense of community (e.g., Koivula & Hännikäinen, 2017; Osterman, 2000; McMillan & Chavis, 1986), (school) engagement (e.g., Ladd & Dinella, 2009; Skinner & Belmont, 1993; Willms, 2003; Upadyaya & Salmela-Aro, 2013; Fredericks, Blumenfeld & Paris, 2004; Simons-Morton & Crump, 2003), belongingness, togetherness (e.g., Hännikäinen & Oers, 1999), and sense of school or classroom membership. (For a more complete review see e.g., Osterman, 2000; Allen et al., 2018).

Additionally, the notion of belonging is also closely linked with the discussions on identity, inclusion, participation, and agency. These academic concepts will not be explored in detail, but I will explain their connection to belonging. In short, constructing belongings is in many ways about identifying oneself with the environment, with other words: building one's identity. However, contradicting with the traditional understanding of identity that sees individuals as singular and integral subjects through identity categories, belonging allows seeing people with multiple solidarities and hybrid identities (Calhoun, 1999, p. 225 as cited in May, 2013, p. 8). Stuart Hall (1999) argues that when identity is conceptualized as a postmodern subject it also constantly takes shapes and molds in relationships to the environment. Therefore, following May (2013, p. 9), I would argue that the main difference between the concepts of identity and belonging is the starting point. 'Identity' begins from the idea that there is an 'I', a separate, autonomous individual, while 'belonging' focuses on what connects people to other people, cultures, or the material world (See also Lähdesmäki et al., 2016, pp. 3-4).

The connection to material world is also the explanation for why the focus of this research is not on participation or inclusion, but on belonging. The first two concepts are generally used to refer to relationships with people and groups, and hence focusing on them would unable under-

standing belonging in a wider spectrum. The connectedness of these three concepts can be scrutinized by having a look at the definitions. In the operational definition attempt for inclusion Qvortrup & Qvortrup (2018) following Luhmann argue that in addition to being about physical location of a person, inclusion is also a matter of social participation and of addressing the included person's sense of belonging to the community (Qvortrup & Qvortrup, 2018). Participation as well has been defined in many ways throughout the years, but according to Niemi & Kiilakoski (2019) participation always requires that the participants have both agency and feeling of involvement, and that those manifest themselves in action (p. 3).

The focus of the majority of previous studies on belonging in school context has been on social belonging or school belonging. The intentions of previous studies on belonging have often been to define, measure and in other ways explore belonging in order to determine its antecedents and how it could be fostered (See, e.g., Allen et al., 2012). There are numerous researchers emphasizing all the potential benefits that a higher degree of experienced sense of belonging can bring about (See, e.g., meta-analysis Allen et al., 2018; Roiha, 2018), and all the potential risks that might be knocking behind the door if the need for belonging is not met (See, e.g., Anderman, 2003; Finn, 1989; Osterman, 2000, as cited in Arslan, 2018; Cemalcilar, 2010). After identifying and categorizing the groups that struggle to belong and are thereby considered vulnerable (Lähdesmäki et al., 2016, p. 22; Slaten, Allen, Vella-Brodrick & Ferguson, 2016), those groups have become the main focus of qualitative belonging research.

While some correlations and even dependencies between belonging and factors like nationality/immigrant status, race/ethnicity, social class, abilities, age, mental health, gender, behavior concerns, or sexuality have been suggested especially based on quantitative methods, also considerable heterogeneity for such themes has been identified (See for example Allen et al., 2018, p. 21). The findings suggest, that the complexity of belonging might have been overly simplified to measure and identify causal connections or patterns, in order to be able to predict and affect the future (See e.g. meta-analysis by Osterman, 2000). May & Muir (2015) have come to a similar conclusion as they argue that a 'person's sense of belonging can never be predicted, nor can one easily determine in advance the 'variables' that could be used to measure it' (p. 8). This suggests that it might be necessary to explore belongings in their everyday context without categorizations. This kind of approach allows to deal also with those people, who do not fit within specific and visible categories of distinctiveness (See e.g. Roman, 2018, p. 242).

In the literature it has been argued that the research on school belonging has been fragmented and diluted by inconsistency in the use of terminology (Allen et al., 2018). This study contributes to the contemporary academic discussion of belonging by offering an opportunity to see belonging differently. Instead of merely focusing on a single dimension, such as belonging to place (school), mainstream nationality/ethnicity or (classroom) culture, and believing that belonging is measurable, the research aims to answer to the call of exploring the construction of plurality of scales of belonging and illuminating the ways in which these intersect with each other (May, 2011; Antonsich, 2010; Wood & Waite, 2011).

Although the starting point of observations is on children's social interactions or intra-actions, in this research I maintain that in addition to feeling belonging to a person, to a group, or to a community, it is also possible to feel belonging to a nationality, to an ethnicity or culture and to material world. Taking this approach is supported by May & Muir (2015) who argue that 'it is important not to try to pre-determine what belonging consists of, but rather explore the ways in which the different dimensions of belonging – relational, cultural, temporal and sensory – interact with each other to contribute to a person's overall sense of (not) belonging, thus influencing that person's capacity to act in their surroundings' (p. 9).

As a small-scale qualitative study, which is based on the ideas of contextuality and production of knowledge, the research does not attempt to produce results that could be generalized to all educators or classrooms. The goal is also not to identify children who belong or don't belong, nor is it to find ways to assure that everyone could belong, that has been intended in the previous research. Instead, the research aims to make visible different often naturalized, and therefore nonpolitical, processes in which multiple belongings (and simultaneously non-belongings) are produced in the lives of children. In this way, the research may provide depth and insight to the contemporary discussion on belonging while providing the educators a chance to ponder together the variety of practices in which belongings and non-belongings are produced.

The research questions are:

1. What kind of belongings and/or non-belongings may be produced in the everyday school life?
2. How are the social belongings and/or non-belongings produced in the everyday school life?

2 Theoretical framework

The study draws from feminist post-structural conversations in the fields of education and social sciences. Although the research is not focused on gender, the understandings of central concepts, epistemology (nature of knowledge) and ontology (nature of reality) have been influenced by these conversations. These conversations have also emphasized the necessity of researcher's reflexivity.

Feminist post-structural approach suits this research because the theoretical framework allows seeing belonging as a complex phenomenon as it is. Feminist scholars are concerned how to explore and work with differences in a way that does not rely on essential notions and categories of difference (such as ethnicity, gender, social class) but, rather on recognizing identities as multiple, fluid and intersecting in complex ways in different contexts (See Reay, 2007; Gringeri, Wahab, & Anderson-Nathe, 2010, p. 394). In this paradigm, people are seen as active subjects, that are in constant change, 'intra-actively becoming' (See Barad, 2007, as cited in Hickey-Moody & Willcox, 2019), and therefore it doesn't make sense to create fixed positions for them by labeling who belongs and who does not.

Belonging as a concept might seem a bit ambiguous. In everyday language, belonging has a variety of meanings. Many of them have a rather positive connotation reflecting feeling happy or comfortable in a place or a situation, while others are perhaps more ambiguous hinting towards the possibility of exclusion and the necessity to conform and struggle to belong. Belonging as a word can be used to refer to being 'part of' or 'a member' of a group or to 'fitting in', to being 'suitable', 'appropriate' or 'property' of someone. It can be argued that as a word, belonging entails a paradox that to be a natural, suitable part of something, requires conformity to certain rules or norms.

Contemporary academic literature on belonging usually explores belonging through two analytical dimensions: sense of belonging and politics of belonging (Antonsich, 2010; Lähdesmäki et al., 2016, p. 8; Stratigos, Bradley, & Sumsion, 2014; Yuval-Davis, 2011), and the scholars have tend to focus either on one or the other. In this research, both dimensions are understood to be inherently intertwined/co-dependent, and they are discussed in different subchapters only because of practical reasons.

Because the starting point of this study is informed by the work by feminist theorists, it begins from a position which insists that one does not simply ontologically belong to the world or any

group within it (See Bell, 1999; May & Muir, 2015), instead multiple, simultaneous, interrelated belongings are chosen, negotiated, performed and accepted in every day encounters (Juutinen, 2018; Stratigos et al., 2014; Sumsion et al., 2011). Belonging is inherently political and therefore attention is paid to the inter-relatedness of knowledge and power (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007). And as feelings are, sense of belonging is also dynamic and ambiguous.

In the following subchapters the nature of belonging is explored through these dimensions.

2.1 Nature of belonging through some of its characteristics

2.1.1 Sense of belonging

In a simple way, the first dimension of belonging, sense of belonging, relates to the personal, individual and subjective emotions of an individual. Traditionally this aspect of belonging has been understood as a feeling of being at home – of experiencing safety, familiarity and comfort (Antonsich, 2010; Lähdesmäki et al., 2016). Yuval-Davis (2006) has suggested that the personal dimension also consists of emotional attachment. May & Muir (2015) characterize belonging as a sense of ease with oneself and one's surroundings referring to Miller (2003, p. 218), and May (2013) specifies that the feeling often remains unnoticed 'until disturbed or under threat' (p. 89; p. 94). May & Muir (2015) referring to Miller (2003) and Leach (2002) suggest that a sense of belonging can be achieved in two different ways, either 'creating a sense of identification with one's relational, material and cultural surroundings (Miller, 2003, p. 223)' or 'recognizing – or misrecognizing – the self in the other' (Leach, 2002, p. 287). (p. 1)

2.1.2 Relational belonging

Traditionally belonging has been researched mostly as a psychological individual process, but although sense of belonging is a fundamental part of belonging, it doesn't make sense to talk about it without asking: "belonging to what"?

Belonging is a relational concept because it 'necessarily focuses on social interaction and intersubjectivity, and on how belonging is achieved and accomplished, both individually and collectively' (May, 2013, p. 82). The relational nature of belonging refers to belonging being characterized or constituted by a variety of relations with the surrounding world (Smart, 2007 as cited by May, 2013, p. 151). According to May (2013) this signifies that people are understood

as members of a range of different settings and groups, within and between which claims for belonging are negotiated (May, 2013 p. 151).

Belonging being relational, doesn't only refer to relationships with human beings or groups of people. It can be also constituted by relations to ethnicity, culture, places or other dimensions of the material world. Sumsion & Wong (2011, p. 35) in their analytical model propose that belonging has ten (10) interconnected "ways of belonging" or dimensions of belonging. According to them, sense of belonging can be emotional, social, cultural, spatial, physical, spiritual, moral, ethical, political and/or legal. These ways of belonging should not be seen as separate. All of these dimensions are interrelated and it is possible to belong in different places and times in different and multiple ways. May (2013, pp. 151-152) instead of discussing ways of belonging, describes different aspects and modes of being and belonging, such as the cultural, the relational and the embodied. Citing Smart (2007) May (2013) suggests that 'truly understanding belonging requires adopting a holistic view that sees the person as embedded in a complex field of entangled cultural, relational and material worlds' (p. 151).

As discussed, although personal experience of sense of belonging for example towards many different groups and places seems to be the most prevalent perspective especially in psychological studies, it is not the only dimension of the phenomenon. Even relationality of belonging does not merely refer to an idea that individual's sense of belonging would necessarily require at least one other counterpart, but to the idea that belonging has a social dimension. Mere familiarity with a group of people, place or a culture is not enough for us to gain an individual or personal emotion of comfort – a sense of belonging. May (2013) describes that as a result of the interconnected nature of our lives and intersubjectivity, belonging should rather be seen as a collective or shared experience. Our sense of belonging is also affected by the sense of belonging experienced by those close to us. (May, 2013, p. 130.)

2.1.3 Politics of belonging

As Sara Ahmed (2004) has argued, feelings or emotions are not innocent of social structures. If this is the case, then as discussed previously, a clear distinction between the two dimensions – sense of belonging and the politics of belonging - is impossible or at least cannot be convincing any more.

Since the significant work by Yuval-Davis (2006) belonging has been started to be seen not only as a relational psychological process, but also as socially constructed and it has started to be explored as a political process. Like Anthias (2013, p. 6) has noted, the arenas of the political infiltrate all parts of social life, including feelings, orientations, values, and sometimes also networks and resources. Anthias (2013) describes that in a bigger scale politics can be seen in the contestations about who belongs, who doesn't and to what extent they do or don't. In a smaller scale, just as much politically, our sense of belonging is forged also in the micropolitics of everyday life. (pp. 6-7.) Antonsich (2010, p. 645) describes the political nature of belonging 'as a discursive resource which constructs, claims, justifies, or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion and/or exclusion'.

Kaisa Kuurne, PKA Ketokivi (2016), has investigated the formation of bonds, boundaries and belonging from a sociological perspective. She summarizes that belonging has, not two but three, intertwining dynamics. Similarly to the two dimensions presented earlier, Kuurne describes the first dynamic as an individual feeling of belonging or alienation towards a group or an identity category, while the second dynamic, reflecting Yuval-Davis' (2006) politics of belonging, suggests that it is not enough to have a solely personal experience or individual feeling of belonging in groups or identity categories, also others must identify the individual to be part of the group. (Kuurne, 2016.) The third dynamic according to Kuurne's categorization is the work, through which one successfully manages to belong to others, or decides to distinguish themselves from others. (Kuurne, 2016 as cited in Roiha 2018.) Kuurne's 'work' can be thought as 'dynamics of belonging' and it can be described together with politics of belonging.

2.1.4 Dynamics of belonging

Traditionally even when sense of belonging and non-belonging have been understood as relational and political, they have been typically seen as something fixed and predefined, for example in very close relation to citizenship status (Yuval-Davis, 2006). In these cases, the reasons for not belonging have been thought as person's characteristics and living surroundings. Therefore, the logical solution for not-belonging, or lower degree of sense of belonging, has been to fix the situation by fixing – assimilating - the person to be more like those who do belong, or alternatively to move them elsewhere where they might belong better. This is problematic, because as Antonsich (2010) has noted, even if a person was willing to assimilate, they

might be exposed to discourses and practices of socio-spatial exclusion due to some of their characters like skin color or place of birth (p. 650).

As mentioned in the introduction, relaying on existing literature, this study draws on understanding of belonging as a dynamic and ever-changing (Antonsich, 2010; May, 2011; Yuval-Davis, 2011) political process within which belonging and exclusion are understood as relational rather than individual phenomena (See also Qvortrup & Qvortrup, 2018). May (2013) referring to other authors reminds that 'the world and the people in it, including ourselves, are constantly undergoing change' (p. 90) and explains that because of that, belonging is something that has to be kept achieving or doing. Stratigos and colleagues (2014) agree describing the dynamic nature of belonging stating that belonging 'is not something that is achieved with any kind of finality; it is constantly in process, being enacted, contested and negotiated in the various times, places and groups in which we live our daily lives' (p. 178).

This process of producing or constructing belongings can be described through different kind of actions or dynamics. One chooses, negotiates, performs and cultivates their belongings, and the shown desires of belongings can then either be accepted (by sending signals of acceptance and inclusion), dismissed or denied by others. Sumsion & Wong (2011, pp. 33-35) suggest that the different ways of belonging 'operate' within and across analytical axes that represent dynamics and politics of belonging. The axes are: 1) desire and resistance, which refers to individual's personal willingness to belong, 2) performativity, which refers to individual's active agency consisting of negotiation with others through acceptation, dismissal or denial by others, and 3) categorization between 'we' and 'others'. Categories of belonging work as tools for an individual to desire and to reject as well as to negotiate belongings.

Understanding belonging as a political and dynamic phenomenon provides conceptual tools for exploring belonging and nonbelonging, as well as inclusion and exclusion, as intertwined aspects of human life (See Juutinen, 2018; Qvortrop & Qvortrop 2017). Pfaff-Czarnecka (2013) citing Geschiere (2009) argues that social exclusion appears to be the norm 'in the climate of politically charged passions about belonging'. Lähdesmäki and colleagues (2016) suggest that 'people's attempts to establish a primordial right to belong are … often politically employed in order to exclude others" (p. 25). Excluding other, according to Davies (2014, p. 50) is often a means of assuring one's own place in the group (as cited in Juutinen, 2018). England (2011) and Yuval-Davis (2011) even go on arguing that there is no belonging without exclusion, or with other words - by definition, claiming belonging in one group means excluding another

group. Same has also been argued by Qvortrop & Qvortrop (2017) who call the labelling of a student as 'included' in itself as an act of exclusion.

Belonging is still thought to have a requirement for sameness. May (2013) states that when it comes to our interactions with others, we either consciously or unconsciously present ourselves as members of particular categories. We are categorized by others, and they categorize us. (p. 129.) Citing Young (1990, p. 235) May (2013) continues pondering that by idealizing community, we also validate the 'fear and aversion some social groups exhibit towards others', because "if community is a positive norm, that is, if existing together with others in relations of mutual understanding and reciprocity is the goal, then it is understandable that we exclude and avoid those with whom we do not or cannot identify". (Young, 1990, p. 235, as cited in May, 2013, p. 125.) Sumsion and Wong (2011) in their analytic model of belonging called the same phenomenon simply as categorization.

Although many researchers seem to claim that belonging requires exclusion of someone else, throughout history, all around the world, understanding belonging as bounded and exclusive is becoming increasingly problematic (Bauman, 2011, as cited in Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2013). Instead of one belonging, multiple belongings can be negotiated. Belonging involves negotiating multilayered senses of belonging that may compete and conflict in different ways (Wood & Waite, 2011, p. 201). When conceptualizing belonging Lähdesmäki and others (2016) describe that the idea of hybrid and multilayered identities and belonging has been theorized with the concept of intersectionality. This aspect emphasizes, how belonging always comprises social and political dimensions, no matter how individual the experience of belonging may feel. (Lähdesmäki et al., 2016 as cited in Roiha, 2018. For elaboration on intersectionality see Dill & Kohlman, 2012.) The intertwinedness of different dimensions of belonging is also described by May & Muir (2015) contemplate that different facets of belonging are inextricably linked, which makes it difficult to talk of one of them without necessarily talking about other aspects as well (p. 2).

To summarize the theoretical framework, in this study sense of belonging and politics of belonging are understood to be inherently intertwined/co-dependent dimensions of the same phenomenon. Belonging is understood as a feeling of safety, familiarity and comfort, which is always produced in relation to the environment through different dynamics and power. It is possible to choose, negotiate, perform and accept multiple, simultaneous, interrelated belongings. In the next section, I will explain how this complex phenomenon was approached in this study.

3 Methodological framework

3.1 Ethnographic approach directing the study

3.1.1 Ethnography as a method relays substantially on 'participant observation'

It is challenging to try to define ethnography unambiguously (See e.g. Gordon, Holland & Lahelma, 2007, p. 188; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, pp. 1–2). For some researcher, ethnography refers to a complete philosophical paradigm that should be followed, while for others – including this study – it refers to more like a method or a set of methods that relies partly or substantially on participant observation (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994, p. 248).

Observation is considered as one of the oldest and most fundamental research methods in social sciences (McKechnie, 2008, p. 573). The roots of ethnography can be found in the history of anthropology, when cultural anthropologists from colonialist countries travelled to observe unknown peoples at the end of 19th century. After this, in the 1920s the sociologists of Chicago School turned their focus in the local subcultures within their own city. Later on, the focus of ethnographic research has also been focused on researcher's own culture and familiar environments like educational institutions. (See e.g. Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, pp. 1–2; Lappalainen 2007.) In this study that can be classified as educational ethnography, I - a Finnish woman who went to a Finnish public school, worked in a school as a school assistant, and after finding passion in education studied in a Finnish university in intercultural teacher education to become a teacher - have observed mainly pupils and their interactions or intra-actions in a Finnish public school.

In ethnography, the researcher takes part in the everyday life of certain group of people in a long term, overtly or covertly, observing what is happening and what is being said, asking questions or in other ways collecting any type of available material that might shed light on their research interest (Creswell, 2007, pp. 71–72; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 1). Although there has been an idea that a long observation period is necessary for an ethnographical research, nowadays, the general understanding is that the field-work should last reasonable amount of time (Lappalainen, 2007, p. 11). Therefore it has been argued that also a short and focused ethnographic observation, may serve its purpose (Handwerker, 2002), depending on the nature of the research focus. Naturally in the case of a shorter observation period, like in this research, careful planning of the fieldwork might be even more crucial than in longer observation periods

to make the most of the short time. However, participant observation serves to explore the processes in which belongings are produced.

Ethnography, as a critically oriented method, suits this research very well because of two reasons. Firstly, because in ethnographic research it is possible to acknowledge the complexity of the world and to be quite open about their limitations and partiality (Spencer 2001, p. 250). And secondly, because it is a method that enables to reconfigure traditional understandings or simply like Skeggs (1999, p. 33 as cited in Riita-oja, 2013, p. 56) has put it: to 'see differently'. The importance of seeing the familiar through eyes of a stranger is explained by Coffey (2005, pp. 213-215) who explains that finding new knowledge is challenging if the observer sees only what they expect to see. Therefore ethnographic approach requires keeping an open mind and it has been sometimes called as the 'serendipity approach'. This refers to the idea, that the ethnographic researcher needs to be open also for the things that they were not looking for.

3.1.2 Ethnographic descriptions are researcher's subjective interpretations of the reality

The research paradigms related to ethnography have quite accurately followed the overall development of qualitative research. Spencer (2001) has claimed that 'in a remarkably short period of time it has simply become impossible for ethnographers to write as if their subjects lived in sealed, often timeless bubbles called 'cultures'' continuing to argue that this development owes much to the achievement of feminist scholars who have revealed that also within apparently unitary cultural settings there are differences (p. 250).

Nowadays ethnography challenges the ideas of absolute truth and consensus. According to Clifford (2010, p. 7) even the best ethnographic texts are only 'systems of truth' and inherently partial, because power and history work through them, in ways that their authors cannot fully control. Therefore ethnographic descriptions are considered only as interpretations that can never fully describe the reality. By writing notes about a phenomenon, the writer inevitably gives meaning to it (See Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002, p. 154; Atkinson, 1992, pp. 2-5). Written and represented everyday life is never equal to the material everyday life that the ethnographer has observed (Salo, 1999). Therefore the idea of a distant observer must be abandoned and the researcher must be seen as a historically positioned, locally located and humane observer (Coffey, 1999). This understanding of meaning making and knowledge production as subjective processes forces ethnographers to constantly critically reflect on their actions as well as their pre-conceived notions and prejudices (Pillow, 2003; Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002).

3.2 Data generation

Ethnographic research has traditionally been presented as consisting of different phases (see Salo, 1999; Creswell, 2007, pp. 156-157), but nowadays many researchers prefer to see the data production, analysis and reporting as inherently linked to each other in the process of knowledge production (Lappalainen, 2007). Typically for ethnographic research the data generation in this study happened partly simultaneously with analysis process, which for clarity is discussed in a separate sub-chapter 3.3.

Access to the everyday (school) life of first graders was sought through ethnographic 'hanging out' (See e.g. Kaukko, Korkiamäki, & Kuusisto, 2019) and ethnographic observation of the children in their educational settings. The data was generated over a period of two school weeks, approximately 40 hours, in November 2019. The research took place in a middle-sized Finnish municipality in a comprehensive school that has ~400 students in year groups 0-9. The school is located in a neighbourhood in which the cultural, economic and social resources vary between families. Although generally for ethnographic research describing the socio-spatial context of the study is important, I have decided not to reveal more identificators of the school in order to secure the research participants' anonymity better. This decision is also justified by the focus of research being on the processes of negotiations instead of culture, and that the research is not aiming to generalize the findings.

During the observation period the hanging out and observations were not limited only in school's classroom spaces, all the contrary. Tuula Gordon and Elina Lahelma with their research group (Gordon et al. 1999, p. 691) have developed an analytical tool, which categorizes school as its official, informal and physical spheres that all interact with each other. Although I was interested also in school's formal or official dimension, due to the requirement of silence and teachers being so strong characters during lessons, I intentionally focused on observing the informal interactions and the physical dimension of school. Therefore I followed the children also in the school's corridors, playground, dining hall, sports facilities as well as due to one of the weeks being the 'swimming week', also in the bus and in the swimming hall.

Already before the field work began, I chose to observe overtly, in a participative manner, living the everyday school life actively together with the research participants. In practice this meant helping the pupils as well as the teacher, playing during lessons and recess time when invited to, engaging in conversations with adults and children. The primary objective for the first week of the field-work period was to assure getting research permissions from all pupils. However, I

took this as a chance to become a bit more familiar with the context as well as with the children by participating in their daily life at school without the need to be married to my notebook. This can be considered as ethnographic hanging out.

Everyday school life is a rich compilation of moments, the majority of which escape the perception of the researcher. During the ethnographical hanging out period, while getting to know the children and the classroom routines, I was able to prepare myself for the next week's observation pondering, how I should locate myself in the classroom during the observation period. I had promised the caretakers and the children that participating in the research conducted in the classroom would not hamper the studies, but for my research it was important to be able to hear and see well. For this, I struggled to locate myself in a way that I would not be blocking anyone's view or path. Depending on the teaching arrangements, I either wandered in the classroom so that I could hear what was discussed or sat at the front of the class face towards the pupils so that I could concentrate on observing nonverbal communication like their gestures and facial expressions.

Having voluntarily taken the role of an almost typical 'helper' adult in the classroom during the first week definitely had an effect on the results. First of all, I believe the social interactions of the first week were essential for the data generated during the period. Naturally the interactions resulted in closer relationships with the research participants and hence children allowed me to locate myself where I could hear and see their interactions. On the other hand, having been an adult conducting myself like other adults during the first week had seemed to make me an 'outsider' in terms of their social relationships with between children. Possibly due to their experience during the first week, the children also came to me searching for assistance in peer relations like they do with other adults.

After the first week I started to use pen and paper to write the notes as immediately as I could in the classroom, focusing on writing down the discussions word-to-word, as the research participants had expressed themselves. Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (2001, p. 353) have stated that field notes are written contemporaneously with the interactions they intend to describe and recount. They are intended to provide descriptive accounts of people. I spent very limited time at the school, so mostly I wrote down everything directly in the moment. Although I considered the possibility of writing the notes outside of class in order to not disturb the lessons, I also came to this decision because I noticed that I was living so much in the moment that later on it would have been too difficult for me to recall what had happened during the previous lesson.

Even when writing in the moment, it was impossible to describe what had happened in detail and in this way produce thick descriptions as urged by anthropologist Geertz.

Where ever I was observing, I generally started writing an overview of the situation, concentrating on issues like where we were, how the overall atmosphere was and what people were doing. After that, I wrote down what the children were discussing or what they were doing during lessons, in transitory moments, during lunch, as well as in informal play during recess. Many of the moments that became registered by me and ended up in the field notes were able to be foreseen, but others arrived unexpectedly as a surprise. I paid attention to the interactions between the children writing down about everything I noticed. However I was being selective (See Emerson et al., 2001, p. 353). I tried to focus on the situations that seemed somehow meaningful or interesting considering my initial research question, or stopped me and made me wonder. When observing, I focused on children's interactions, but I didn't restrict the observation to children or even to the members of the classroom community. Because ethnography as a subjective research method requires reflexivity, I additionally wrote down my own feelings and the general atmosphere in the classroom. Additionally as suggested by Lähdesmäki et al., (2016) and the theoretical framework presented in the previous section, I intentionally tried to write notes also about the spatial and material aspects.

After the first two days of observation, I reflected on my field notes that I had been mostly writing down what could be heard or seen. Observing and documenting action is often tempting, because stillness was considered as the ideal situation in the classroom as this teacher's comment implies.

> Teacher: *"You can use 10 seconds or 10 minutes in this. Now we are waiting that the folks settle down".*

As a researcher and observer, I was automatically directing my attention to situations in which someone was moving. With other words, there were rather clear rules for talking during lessons, so the situations in which someone did not obey the rules, were easily noticed by me.

> *Paju plays baseball with pen and rubber, but returns to their seat to continue with the exercises without a reminder from the teacher.*
>
> *Syksy gets up on their seat every once in a while searching from peer attention. Syksy might also stand on the seat to jump, to go around standing on it or to start flossing alone. Without getting any attention the child decides to sit down.*

Because of this appreciation of silence, most of the conversations between peers during lessons were not written down, because they were intended as silent comments between friends and I couldn't hear them. This reflection made me pay more intentional attention to situations in which nothing interesting seemed to be happening during the last days of observation period.

On daily basis, after each day of observation I rewrote the hand written notes on computer and added details if it felt necessary. Most of the original citations of pupils, teachers and teaching assistant were in Finnish. Therefore, the rewriting process also included underlining the moments that at that moment felt the most meaningful or intriguing for any reason and translating at least those into English as accurately as possible. In some cases the citations have been slightly modified to make them more understandable, although this endangers the child's voice from being heard as does translating them to another language. The ethical aspects will be further discussed more in depth in the section 6.

As mentioned in the description of ethnography, qualitative analysis has often been criticized for telling what is already known and has already been seen, heard and read before. Making notes is always a process of meaning making. In moments, making meaning of my field notes when re-writing them felt really challenging. I couldn't find the red line in what had been happening. There are many possible reasons for this. It is possible that the children's stories and comments were really fragmented (See Estola & Puroila, 2013). After all we are talking about small, 6- to 7-year-old children. Then on the other hand, it is equally possible that I just had not heard, noticed or understood everything necessary to be able to interpret the situation and understand what was going on.

The final data consists of observatory notes of fleeting moments in every day (school) life and my field journal reflections on them. According to Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (2007) ethnographic field notes can be structured as dialogues, stories or episodes. In total a little more than 100 small episodes were written down. Most of them are shorter, others longer. Later on, in addition to these two weeks of field-work period, I returned to the classroom to substitute one of the teachers for two days during the analysis period. In this study I naturally didn't use the diary notes written those days, due to ethical reasons. However it is worth mentioning it, because spending two more days with the same children might have deepened my analysis, the process of which will be described in the next subchapter.

3.3 Analysis process

The analysis process of this study was inspired by Jackson and Mazzei (2012; 2017) who describe it as thinking with theory. Their approach resonated with me because ethnographic analysis is not a linear process; the generation, analysis, interpretation and theorization of the data overlap during the research process (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 158). 'Thinking with theory' allows the networked functioning of thought and hence provides an opportunity to explore how things work, instead of contemplating on what things mean (Jackson & Mazzei, 2017, p. 727).

The after field-work analysis process began by becoming truly familiar with the data through reading it and thinking with it. When going through the data, I was automatically looking for connections with the theory, especially with Sumsion's and Wong's (2011) analytical model: ways of belonging and axes of belonging. In search of answers to the first research question, I read through the episodes over and over again, comparing them to the ways of belonging and classifying them in categories based on this comparison. This categorization was done out of curiosity and it widened my understanding of the generated data seen through the lens of belonging. After having identified categories I wasn't satisfied. I felt like that the created categories did not describe how belongings had appeared to me in the everyday school life. The approach I had taken, had just simplified the complex nature of belonging and left me with generalizations, that I had strived to avoid.

Simultaneously disappointed and motivated, I returned back to the generated data and this time chose not to analyze the whole generated data as such, but strived to identify interesting episodes that particularly moved, surprised or puzzled me (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 210; Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). I felt comfort reading that at this stage the researcher should trust in their intuition telling them that something is important (Corbin, 2009, pp. 44–45). I highlighted the episodes that seemed somehow specifically interesting to me in the light of the theoretical framework of belonging and copied those episodes, related analytical notes and field journal entries on another file that I named "hotspots" after Maclure (2013). In this way, I was able to classify the data based on what significant in terms of the research question had happened during the two weeks of observations. I noted that this part of analysis was mostly focused on the ethnographic observations on episodes I had classified as potentially dealing with social belonging.

I analyzed the hotspots that I had chosen by thinking what do the chosen episodes describe and why do they seem so interesting to me? I even simultaneously pondered if some of the episodes had possibly actually chosen me (See Jackson & Mazzei, 2012), because they had seemed to be calling for me strongly although I couldn't express why. It is very clear, that I privileged some data over other. Already the data generated through observation is filtered many times before it ends up on the research report. It is simply not possible to pay attention to everything, write down [or in any other way express] everything that is observed, and finally everything that has been hand written might not be able to be used in the final data. I had written on my field notes that *I noticed that in moments I was analyzing situations thinking whether or not they might be worth writing down based on my research questions.* When I entered the school and started the ethnographic field work, I already held a lot of theory and concepts as "mental furniture" (Spivak, 2014, p. 77 as cited by Jackson & Mazzei, 2017, p. 730), which had directed my attention.

Moreover, in addition to the studied theory as my mental furniture, I am aware that also my own personal history and professional history in the world of education have similarly guided the direction of my thoughts throughout the research process and increasingly towards the end. I want to emphasize, that the data hotspots that were chosen as results and my reflections on them, mostly tell about me as a cultural producer, although the episodes were created together with the research participants. I believe that the episodes also resonate with the reality and that through my researcher's lenses, it is possible for the reader to grasp something about the observed phenomenon. This research however doesn't suggest that the chosen data would speak for itself purely and authentically.

It is important to mention that a big part of the generated material was finally not used, because it was not easily linked to belonging. Furthermore, a part of the generated data that was clearly describing the processes belonging production was also not presented as results, because there were several similar situations that most possible wouldn't have brought much new to the reader. Finally, some very interesting episodes had to be left out of the analysis due to the ethical reasons that will be discussed after the results in section 6. In the next section, the observations on belongings are presented.

4 Results: Observations on multiple belongings in everyday school life

The first analysis process of the generated material described in the 3.3. formed seven (7) dimensions: social, ethical, cultural, material, spatial, physical and temporal belongings. The first six of these seemed to include the aspects of emotional and political belonging. As the first result in subchapter 4.1. I will shed light on the interconnectedness and co-dependence of the formed analytical dimensions through two short episodes.

The interconnectedness and co-dependence of different dimensions of belonging was further explored through thinking about the observations and the lived ethnographic experience with theory. As a result to the second research question in subchapter 4.2. I explore how social belongings and non-belongings are produced in the everyday practices through three observations. In subchapter 4.2.1. I claim that social belongings are partly produced on the foundation of entangled cultural, material and spatial routines of belonging. In subchapter 4.2.2. I delineate that although the production of social belonging is enabled through structures and practices, it is not achieved through them. And finally, in 4.2.3. I highlight that social belongings are produced in the fleeting moments of noticing and leaving unnoticed.

4.1 An array of intertwining and co-dependent dimensions of belongings and non-belongings is produced

In this study, belonging has been understood as a dynamic feeling of experiencing safety, familiarity and comfort that is always experienced in relation to the environment. In the analysis process I identified seven (7) interconnected and overlapping dimensions of belonging. When one source of belonging was observed, it often made it easier to notice also others.

Instead of claiming to be able to access people's feelings and related thoughts, these findings should be considered as interpretations. There is no certainty of whether or not the children actually felt a sense of belonging to their surroundings in the episodes that I managed to note down and recall. These short episodes can however be used to imagine the potential interconnectedness of the dimensions of belongings:

> *Children are preparing themselves to start the lesson. There are three headphones in the classroom. Misa and Ruu nearly run to the headphones to make*

sure that they could use them. Ruu takes one pair and Misa takes the two remaining ones from the rack and showing one pair of headphones notifies: "I will give these to Utu because they need them".

When observing, I interpreted this episode as an example of *ethical* belonging. I proudly, and a heart full of hope for the future generations, thought that perhaps Misa had already developed an understanding that their actions or responses affect how others, like Utu, feel or experience belonging. In this situation, Misa acted *politically*, because the chosen actions determined Utu's overall possibilities to participate in the following lesson and to experience *social belonging* in the peer group by being in the same space with them. Based on my other field notes, Utu had seemed to feel *material* attachment or even belonging to the headphones. The headphones enabled Utu to remain in the same classroom space with peers and feeling *spatial* belonging with the classroom that was most familiar to them by this time of the year. The achievement of this feeling was at least partly due to the headphones, which enabled them to experience *physical* belonging, more exactly sensory, auditory belonging. Without the headphones the noises would have been too strong for Utu to be able to concentrate on teaching.

On the other hand, by choosing to take the only remaining headphones to the child who supposedly needed them most, Misa also made it more probable, that the two of them, Misa and Ruu, might be able to keep the headphones. Due to the rules and habits of the classroom *culture* in a hypothetical situation that also a third person, who wouldn't have really needed the headphones as much as Utu, would have taken the last pair before Utu had arrived, all the three children might have been in the danger of losing the headphones. Therefore I began to ponder that perhaps Misa, instead of feeling ethical belonging, based on her cultural knowledge was just deducting, that this was the wisest move in order to be able to use the headphones throughout the lesson. Even if this was the case, Misa had chosen to belong to the classroom culture, or to perform belonging to it. Furthermore, perhaps Misa and Ruu additionally nurtured their mutual sense of *social belonging* having shared this experience together, and enabled a sense of physical belonging in the noisy environment.

In addition to mentioned social, ethical, cultural, material, spatial and physical dimensions of belonging that can be also considered as different sources of belonging, in the data belonging also seemed to be tied to time, more exactly to duration of the belongings. Due to the short observation period the focus of the study was on the belongings that appeared in fleeting moments. Those will be discussed more in depth in subchapter 4.2.3. However, it is worth noting that also signs of more enduring belongings were perceived. Several children seemed to have a

'closer friend' or a few, with whom they spent more time and expressed more physical intimacy. One child also expressed particularly strong social belonging towards their family. This was seen for example in the way the child talked about their mother and sister and showed interest and curiosity towards their actions. The child also wrote on their notebook several times "*I <3 mom*". More generally one link between time and relationships was made by the children during a lunch conversation:

> *During the lunch some of the kids are remembering their times in pre-school. They name all the classmates that used to be in the same pre-school group and excitedly in random turns list different things that they used to do together. One of the children remains quiet eating their food. Their name is not mentioned.*

In this episode the children were simultaneously producing possibilities to feel social belonging to a group through an "us" categorization based on a common history and shared experiences. However, simultaneously also a sense of non-belonging was potentially produced. Belonging was depending on whether or not one happened to belong in the discussed pre-school 'in-group'. Belonging that had been experienced before, was cultivated and cherished again the following year. In the next subchapter, some observations of the processes of production of social belongings are explored.

4.2 Social belongings and non-belongings are produced in the everyday practices

4.2.1 Social belongings are partly produced on the foundation of cultural, material and spatial routines of belonging

By the end of November, the first graders had already learnt the classroom routines quite well and mostly they seemed to know or be able to quickly figure out what was expected of them. Despite the existing appreciation of silence, the teachers also seemed to be intentionally acknowledging that it is natural for small children to be on the move, and therefore the lessons were planned in a way that the children got to move around for example to pick up necessary tools on the other side of the classroom. However, for the majority of the lesson time the children were expected to be sitting by their own desks. The children really strived to behave like they are assumed to behave, but it is not easy for them as the next episode suggests.

> *Finnish lesson is about to begin. The teacher is preparing the kids to start a listening exercise. Jona is still with a book. Teacher says: "Jona, put the book*

down." Jona answers with a worry on their voice: "Let me do this, I will listen to it simultaneously". The listening comprehension begins. Only Ellis and Misa maintain their eyes on the board watching the image that the teacher has placed there as illustration. Other children's eyes are wandering, At least Kaino, Ruu, Kuura and Osmi are coloring or drawing either notebook, book or their hand. Others seem to be either reading or looking at their books. Papu is piling up items on their desk and trying to maintain them in balance, at the end of the listening exercise Pouta even starts whispering Nilla who is sitting next to them. When the teacher asks the first question, only Ellis raises their hand.

The listening exercise episode implies that the children had already adapted themselves to the created operational classroom culture. The children knew when absolute silence was required by the teacher and found various ways to entertain themselves in that situation. One of the familiar classroom routines of each morning is checking by name who has arrived. The children reacted to hearing their name in different ways. Some seemed extremely excited, others blushed and few even seemed to disappear under their school desk when they heard their names. Each morning after seeing who were present, the day plan was gone through and then left visible on the white board. The same day plan was then used to anticipate potential changes in the program and in this way the children were helped to feel more comfortable especially with the issues that were not part of the normal weekly routine. When the children had learnt the function of the day plan it was also easier for them to follow how the day was progressing and discuss it with their peers.

Tiera is working on their handicraft and talking to Kuura gazing towards the white board where the day plan has been written. Tiera sighs: "This is only the first lesson."

Another routine is the use of a timer to mark the transition moments when one activity ends and another begins. The teachers still keep on reminding the children about the function of the timer nearly every time. *"When the timer beeps, you put the notebook away. What happens when the timer beeps? Beep-Beep!"* Sometimes the teacher however forgets to put the timer on, as it is the case in the following episode in which the visual arts lesson is soon about to finish and the teacher informs the pupils:

Teacher: About five minutes time to decorate!

Utu: Aren't you going to put the timer on?

In these situations, it becomes apparent that the routines are important especially for some of the children. The routines make them feel at home, to be more on their comfort zone in an environment that is otherwise quite difficult to perceive. Most of the norms or routines can only be noticed when they don't happen in the normal way. The child had already got used to having the timer in the classroom. It was part of the classroom culture and the use of it provided him with comfort.

At the school the first graders had been given their own little corner. They had their own entrance with a drying cabinet, two bigger classrooms and a smaller one that was usually used by the special needs teacher and a variety of visiting therapists. The three classrooms were connected with a short corridor that had all the children's coat racks and a door that lead to the dining hall and indoor sports facilities. After a couple of months of studies, all these spaces had been covered with different kind of art works made by the first graders. In the following episode, a child who has been struggling to learn Finnish already for at least two years takes an initiative to talk after recess inspired by the wall decorations:

> *Children are undressing coats and overalls by their own named coat racks. One of the familiar teachers to children enters the hallway. Viima searches for the special needs teacher's attention pointing at one of the Snowman paintings on the wall and proudly says "My picture" with a smile on their face.*

Decorating the school spaces together with the children with their art work is assumed to nurture sense of belonging to the school and classroom space. In my field notes there are several mentions of children proudly presenting me their art work, or quizzing me which one of the pieces of art is theirs, similarly to what Viima did with the adult. The art works gave the children opportunities to also begin conversations with each other in an easy way, for example by asking "*which one of the stars is yours?*"

In addition to the above mentioned snowmen and the colorful skies behind them, the corridor in between the classrooms was also decorated by children's self-portraits and the rules of the classroom that, judging by the handwriting, had been written either by the teacher or the school assistant. The rules had been created together and in addition to rules to embrace required student-like behaviour like "I listen to others", "I wait for my turn" and "I raise my hand when I want to speak" they also included other social rules like "I play with everyone and I take the others into consideration". In the classrooms, there were also things hanging on the walls. Most of them were pedagogical decorations like the learnt letters and numbers, the daily schedule

and images of back bag and books that stood for the given homework. However, one day it appeared that not all of the pedagogical decorations were done by the adults.

> *All the children are listening to the teacher very carefully when in the middle of a lesson Utu points on the wall next and states with relatively high voice "There is a picture of my hand". Teacher asks whether the child remembers what the hand stands for. Utu thinks out loud that it serves as a reminder to concentrate. The teacher corrects: "Hand is raised when you have something to say".*

The hand drawn by the child was placed on the board, just in front of the Utu's own desk. Utu remembered it and knew that it had an important school related function. The hand standing on the wall had been a new attempt to encourage and remind that child of the classroom rules that were on the wall. Because so far, the first grader had had considerable difficulties in getting adapted to the rules of listening to others, waiting for their own turn, and remembering to raise their hand to talk.

In the biggest one of the three classrooms all the children had either their own desk or a named seat next to a table placed in rows. In the other big classroom there were own desks for the half of the children, 15 to be exact. Having own named seats for everyone seemed to be a safety issue, as it was several times used by the teacher to quickly see if someone was missing and go to check whether everything was ok if someone had left the space. Seeing the name tags had naturally also helped the teachers and especially the visiting teachers like special needs teacher and Finnish as second language teacher that were always called by their names to learn the children's names. Calling the children by their name made the relations more personal.

The children weren't always urged to study at their own desks, but they were still storing all their belongings there. Often they were divided in two groups that had quite much remained the same throughout the Autumn. This was reflected in the following episode:

> *This morning, after the instructions have been given, the children are allowed to choose in which classroom they want to study. Majority of the children choose the classroom in which they usually work. However, two of the children decide to stay in the bigger classroom, although they usually study in the smaller one. Selmi is sitting next to a dear friend, and Mille is sitting alone, but apparently with an intention of building a relationship with a peer sitting close by, at a talking distance. Mille constantly keeps on peeking what the children sitting in front of them were up to.*

The fact that most of the children decided to go and sit on their assigned seats might be a possible consequence of the habit of dividing the children often in the same way due to the own desks. However, also the negotiation of other social belongings were allowed and enabled during the moments described in the previous episode, as well as during shared lessons, shared spaces and common leisure times. Additionally nearly on daily basis, especially during Finnish language lessons, when also the Finnish as second language teacher and the special needs teacher joined the teacher force, the children were divided in a different way to form four smaller groups. Often in the mornings or in the afternoons only half of the children were at school. This had been the case before the next episode:

> *Today Isse has special arrangements and because of that the child has been guided to join the lesson of another small group in the morning. At first Isse is guided to sit next to a peer, because Ensi, who usually sits there, hasn't arrived. A bit afterwards Ensi arrives late and Isse is guided to move to a different seat. During the first lesson Isse who doesn't have their own seat in this classroom has to change their seat three times because of different reasons.*

This episode reflects well the beginner researcher's difficulties of taking observatory notes. In this moment I had focused on writing down especially unexpected things that were happening during the lesson which in this case consisted of noticing every time Isse had to change the seat. Observing and documenting action is often tempting, because in Western culture actions is valued over silence (Gordon, Lahelma, Tolonen & Holland, 2002). What I had not noted were the emotions of the people involved. I had thought about the importance of emotions before starting the observations, but now I was wondering would having some kind of an analytical frame have helped me to remember to observe the emotional dimension, or had I been too deep in my own thoughts? Owning items and occupying certain own spaces like desks and coat racks, seemed to be an established norm. Breaking the norm, or the familiar routine of classroom culture, seemed to provoke emotions in children as the following two episodes show:

> *The teacher is helping out pupils. Syksy has been picking up some necessary equipment for a while and returns to their seat seeing the teacher sitting there helping a peer. "Hey _____ [teacher's name], don't sit on my seat!"*

In another situation when the children had just entered the classroom before the lesson, two children were sharing one of the seats and drawing in their notebooks.

Someone on the front row comments: "Three people on two seats. The name of that desk should be Runo and San."

In both of the classrooms the desks were organized in a way that everyone was sitting next to someone. Moments like the episode described above, in which the children momentarily chose to sit somewhere else, were possible only during leisure times. The commentator was referring to the names of the children that are written on the desks. The desks of Jona and Runo were placed next to each other, but at that moment also San was sitting there sharing the chair with Runo.

It appeared that having own assigned and named seats was not only a practical safety issue, which the adults had been repeated so many times that it had become a norm which had to be obeyed. The own seat had become dear to the children. Assigned seats naturally allowed the children to store their belongings, but they also freed them from choosing where and with whom to sit during lessons and lunch. When a peer is sitting next to you, the negotiations for belonging happen naturally as in the following episode that takes place in visual arts lesson during which the children are experimenting with mixed methods:

*The children have already painted the colorful skies on previous lesson and now they are planning how to decorate their snowmen. Tini has picked up a black paper with the intention of cutting small squares to represent the little rock buttons. Tini possibly intentionally thinks out loud "*I need six square*s" and asks from a peer "Shall I do three for you and three for myself?" The peer agrees: "Yes, well go ahead".*

As the two children had been placed to sit in pairs the negotiation went quite smoothly despite the missing logic. Tini had wanted to help the peer and offered to cut some small squares for them as well. The intention had been really nice, but it would have been interesting to know if Tini finally ended up cutting all the six necessary squares instead of just cutting three for each person like the accepted proposal had been. The amount of squares had not been the interest of neither of them. Sitting side by side and having the papers and scissors had provided the children with a natural opportunity to interact and construct social belonging.

4.2.2 The production of social belonging is enabled through structures and practices, but it is not achieved through them

On a recess time of a rainy winter day I am outdoors, discussing with the school assistant about her personal life and its connections to school work and simultaneously visually observing the children. Quote on my field journal:

> *Majority of the children are sledding, playing football or swinging. There are a lot of smiling faces and sounds of excitement. However, by the entrance, two children remain silent leaning on two pillars. Although they don't seem to be taking any visual, verbal or physical contact with each other, they are doing exactly the same – leaning their backs against pillars.*

Paying attention to these two children leaning on pillars and thinking that what they were doing was meaningful enough to write notes about it belonging-wise had not been a coincidence. It was the first time that I noticed to Ennu, one of the children, voluntarily interacting with someone and I was happily surprised. In the moment, I interpreted the leaning against pillars as bonding or an attempt of it. However, according to my notes after a few minutes one of the children heads in the rain towards a group of classmates, leaving Ennu alone to take advantage of the protection of the roof on a rainy day. I imagined seeing a hint of disappoint in Ennu's face, so I decided to finish the conversation with the staff member and go and talk with Ennu instead, so that I could get a better idea of what was going on. Quote on my field journal:

> *Ennu tells me that they prefer to stay under the roof because the rain bothers them. I mumble something about how it should rather be snowing in winter time and curiously ask the child how they find the classroom community. Ennu remains in silence for a while that lasts so long that it makes me wonder if they had even heard and understood my question or if Ennu had already decided to decline my improvised invitation to conversation. Although I thought about confirming it several times, I managed to remain silent and without causing any extra pressure on the child. Finally Ennu looks at me peacefully and shares that they had joint the classroom only a few weeks before so they weren't sure yet. Ennu seems willing to continue the chat so I decide to ask if they had already managed to learn everyone's names and Ennu affirms a bit insecurely. Then Ennu turns their attention to the pre-schoolers that were playing nearby. With shivering voice Ennu then*

states: "my sister has already a lot of friends in pre-school" after a meaningful little break adding "at least seven".

It seemed apparent to me that Ennu desired or longed to belong, but possibly found it challenging to take the agency like his/her little sister had done. Concreting the amount of friends the sister had made so far was interpreted by me as a way to emphasize or reassert the shared idea. Having witnessed all the emotion in the Ennu's voice, words and physical aspect, made me consider if it had been wise at all to decide beforehand that I wouldn't get involved in situations with the aim to 'fix the situation' and 'safe children from not belonging' as I discuss in the introduction to this study. In this situation it seemed evident, that the child did have a desire to belong to peers. However apparently for a reason or another, Ennu hadn't encountered the right moment to make a claim to belong. In this case the verbally expressed reason for not trying to make the claim had been the rainy weather, but it might have as well been the nature of the ongoing activities or the personalities of the people.

Belonging is an alluring term that speaks seductively to us (Sumsion & Wong, 2011). The need for social belonging seems to be common shared knowledge. The first verse of one of the songs that the children were practicing for Christmas celebration also highlighted:

"Christmas has arrived, Christmas has arrived, here is a circle of friends. During Christmas no one may be a lonely mouse"

From the point of view of this song that reflects the positivity of belonging, when the adult sees someone to be alone they often feel urged to act and do something as it was my case. Already the same day that I had talked with Ennu, I talked about my observations with the school assistant who had also noticed that the child was usually alone. Later on, I mentioned my observations also to one of the teachers. The teacher was well aware of the situation and they had had a discussion with Ennu's parents. The parents who supposedly know their child the best, had said that Ennu will just need to be given their own time to make friends. The teacher's role and current goal was therefore to be aware of the situation, but let it flow naturally continuing enabling possibilities to participate for children in their own ways instead of assuming that the child would need or want to participate or belong instead of being alone.

The next week one of the days it was snowing again during one of the recesses. One of the classroom's own teachers came up with going around the school yard with a snow scoop leaving a trace behind. Some of the children started to follow the teacher and when the track was ready,

they continued running around the circuit. For the first time in nearly two weeks of observation also Ennu who had chosen to spend the recesses alone until then, joined the other children and ran around with a smile on their face chasing each other in turns.

Adults, especially the teachers have a lot of power within school. They are the people who decide on the majority of the material, spatial and cultural routines that are introduced in the classroom. It is up to them what will be done during the lessons and how the day will proceed. Adult's role is so strong in classroom environment, that the adult's authority position is difficult to surpass. In the following episode the lesson is about to begin, but the teacher has not arrived yet:

> *Many of the children have taken out their notebooks and seem to be drawing something. Two of the children are whispering with each other. A third kid notifies me about this, possibly because I was the only adult in the classroom. As a curious person I ask the classroom probably with a bit exaggeratedly surprised and curious voice if there is something wrong about whispering. A choir of kids shouts "Yes!" Then I ask why might someone think like it is? At least ten hands are raised up to ask for the permission to answer.*

Surprisingly, in this moment I found myself in the position of a teacher. This was not how it was supposed to go. I don't even know what I expected to happen posing that question. For the children it seemed to be clear that continuing to answer in a choir was not an option. Why was I suddenly in a role of a teacher? Had it been because of the context? After all we were in a classroom, I was the only adult and apparently I had somehow wandered in front of the class – where the teachers usually start the lesson. Or perhaps I had used a very teacherish excited and curious tone. However, the children seemed to know how to act in this situation.

> *One child answers without raising their hand that I should ask that from the teachers. I repeat the question to the children now completely in the role of a teacher, asking them to raise their hand if they have an idea of what could be the reason. One of the whisperers raises their hand. I ask them to explain. Exactly in this moment one of the teachers arrives and I shortly explain what had happened and what we were up to. The teacher explains with anecdotes that whispering in company is forbidden because it might cause undesired misunderstandings.*

In this episode I didn't wish to be in the role of a teacher, but when a pupil behaved in a way that was against the classroom norms and answered without raising their hand, the teacher in

me made me dismiss the child's comment and repeat the question with clear instructions on how to give the answer. The comment however was valid. It made me understand that for this child the rule was a rule made by the adults and possibly the child wasn't aware of the justification for it. The rule of not whispering had been created to prevent undesired misunderstandings and to ensure maximal possibilities for experiencing social belonging and minimize potential moments of non-belonging. However, two of the children had been whispering. The social belonging can only partly be achieved through created practices and structures.

4.2.3 Social belongings are produced in the fleeting moments of noticing and leaving unnoticed

In the school ownership of material items has an important role. The children are requested to write down their own names on everything: coat rack, clothes, shoes, books, notebooks, work sheets etc. Also, whenever they are doing works in visual arts or handicrafts they are urged to take tape and mark also the products with their names. During the two weeks I spent in the classroom several times the owners of pencils, erasers and notebooks that had been found were looked for, and more than once, the study books were mixed or lost.

Material dimension of belonging doesn't only refer to ownership. Material items and dimensions can also be used as tools in the negotiations of belonging. In the classroom of this study, according to one of the teachers the children had got drawing notebooks very recently, so they were new to them. The idea of the notebooks was that when the children would arrive in the classroom before the lessons starts, they could go to sit by their own desk and they could draw on them. The notebooks appear in many of my notes. Often a child had looked for peer's attention by asking "*what are you drawing*?" or just complimenting some of the drawings on the notebook. However, before one lesson I listened to these casual conversations more closely. I noticed that two children were drawing on their notebooks and I got intrigued because I overheard Runo asking from their peer with whom they were sitting:

Runo: How many points would you give for this?
San: 20
Runo: Why only 20?
San: Ok, 50.
Runo: Ok, that's good.

Similar negotiation of points to be given seemed to take place on daily basis. I was really curious to know what was happening and what were the rules, if there were any? It seemed like the points were given randomly with the intention to please, or at least to avoid irritating, the peer. In this case 20 points had apparently seemed too little to Runo. I found it interesting that instead of bothering to answer to Runo's ashtonishment and the posed question about the justification for the given points, San decided to raise the points for 150%, which seemed to work for Runo. Obviously it wasn't indifferent to the children what points someone gave. However, when I asked about the process, no one was able to say what were the maximum points or even the typical points. It was simply not important. The maximum points that I heard were "*at least fifty hundreds*" and everyone seemed to know that it was a lot. For context I must mention that earlier the same day we had learned to draw the number 9 together many of the children struggling. In another moment points were negotiated again by other children.

> *A child has walked to peer's desk and asked for points. The peer answered something that I could not hear. After that the asker visibly irritated inquired: "Why?! Seriously, you are giving too few points!" Osmi heard this expression from another side of the classroom, approached the two children and curiously asked "[points] for what?" and without waiting for an answer added: "could I say?" The question was left unanswered as if no one had asked anything.*

Sometimes the received points were accepted, in other moments they were disapproved as unfair like in the previous episode. In this episode it was interesting that even when the given points were pointed out as unfair, Osmi wasn't still given the chance to participate and give their points. The situation didn't seem to be about the points. The plea for points had been indicated to a friend. When another child wanted to join the activity they were completely ignored. Omissions were common also in other situations during leisure time, when the child wasn't interested in interaction:

> *Leisure time in classroom. Everyone is sitting on their seats and working on their notebook of drawings. Selmi is sitting alone. Selmi gets up, approaches Pouta and Nilla and asks: "Pouta, what should I draw? Pouta doesn't answer, so the child repeats their question: "What should I draw?" Still no answer. Selmi returns to their seat.*

Selmi who had been sitting alone had been trying to start a conversation with the two peers, but they weren't given any attention. The most remarkable observation on these omitted negotiations was that the formed positions in this classroom did not seem to be static. Even if in this episode Selmi had been left completely without attention, later the same day or the next Selmi might have been gotten high points from peers voluntarily after seeing their drawing.

Sometimes sense of comfort and ease with another person is only present in fleeting moments. I hadn't paid attention to Kaino and Kiran spending time together earlier, but one time they were provided with a private moment to share together during lunch when all the other children had already left their dining table.

> *Kaino and Kiran are eating side by side. Kaino comfortably keeps their arm on Kiran's chair's back rest and they chat. Both of them are smiling and talking. I feel happy to see this because in other situations that I have paid attention to I have noted that Kiran has been a bit shy to express themself in Finnish and to communicate with peers. Suddenly after a few minutes of friendly talking, Kiran notices the arm of Kaino on the arm rest and jumps to the further edge of his seat. Kaino quickly lifts their arm and the kids continue the conversation with each other, but with less ease. Suddenly Kaino leaves without a word. Kaino's dear friend has finished their meal in another table and they go to return the dishes together.*

In this episode Kiran and Kaino both seemed to be really comfortable and at ease with each other and gave each other attention. Especially if a child has difficulties in interacting with peers, even brief moments like this can feel very special. The comfort zone was crossed with physical proximity that was interpreted as excess. In the stereotypical 'Finnish culture' the embodied dimension of social belonging or physical proximity is often present only in the relationship with the closest friends, with some exceptions. Therefore the fact that Kiran apparently didn't feel comfortable with the arm of Kaino or was surprised by it, seems logical. They weren't close friends. On the other hand just half-a-year ago in pre-school and before that in daycare physical touch used to be considered as completely normal and desirable. In this classroom, it was still generally normal for children to show and cultivate belonging also on an embodied level. Mostly it happened during recess and transitions.

> *It is the first recess of Monday morning. Some of the children are arriving to school only now after the weekend break. Two of the kids are hugging fiercely*

and one decides to hang on other's leg. After this they decide to go swinging together on the same swing. The kids swing together and hug again on the swing. A third child desires to join them, but the two children swinging together don't seem to approve. The third child goes to the school's door to wait for the bells to ring. Also another couple goes to swing on another swing that had been free for the whole time.

However sometimes physical closeness was also seen during lessons. For example when the children sat on their desks listening to the teacher, I often paid attention on how they simultaneously attended to their relations with each other seeking for physical proximity respecting the silence: child tickles peer's ear, peer tickles back, children sit very close to each other and their elbows touch. In another situation embodied dimension belonging is also seen:

It is a lesson of environmental sciences, Finnish language and visual arts. The children have been divided in groups and Ellis, Runo and have been instructed to form a group. Ellis and Runo, and Kaino. Ellis and Runo were seemingly happy that they had got to be in the same group. The two of them walked around hugging each other and Kaino ran after them a bit upset. Because of continuously being a few meters behind the hugging children, Kaino seemed to feel like an outsider.

Kaino had a lot of friends in the classroom and everybody seemed to like them. This episode together with the previous one strived to demonstrate how anybody can feel belonging or non-belonging in moments despite the overall situation. In this situation Kaino had been left unnoticed and according to my interpretation based on Kaino's facial expressions and posture this had caused a moment of feeling non-belonging. In moments when there are more children involved, the negotiation of social belonging, might become more challenging as in this episode in which Tiera is experiencing a creative flow during visual arts lesson:

Kaino, would you get me one more [decoration] like that? Kaino is about to go, when Papu shakes their head and whispers Kaino something. Kaino, who had been asked for help thinks, but heads for the decorations and soon returns with it to Tiera. Papu who had been whispering earlier states: "you should have gotten it by yourself". Tiera explains "Well I was in full swing [with this]" [=Noku mä olin vauhdissa in Finnish] and continues asking if there were any pink decorations. Papu excitedly says "There was! I can get one for you" and goes to look for it.

In this episode Kaino appears to have taught their friend Papu at least two things. Firstly, that despite their friendship they are independent and capable and allowed to make their own choices and notice also others. And secondly, a useful way to behave with peers. Curiously, Papu changed the way that they acted from refusing help to offering help. What the children said and did were interpreted by me to be indebted to their needs of social belonging. Kaino's decision to notice and help Tiera did not put the friendship with Papu in danger, although that might have been Papu's initial worry. It was possible to negotiate multiple simultaneous social belongings.

Sometimes the reasons behind momentary non-belongings and belongings may seem tiny for others as in the next two episodes as in the following episode during practicing a performance for the Finnish Independence Day celebration. The teacher had instructed the children that in the 'flag play' as they called the performance, the flag should be kept in the right hand.

Child 1: But I am not really right handed

Child 2: But I am left handed

Teacher: You must follow the mainstream now.

In this episode the teacher's intention certainly had not been to produce feelings of non-belonging with the choreography and supposedly leaving the left-handed children unnoticed. The two children who had exclaimed their different handedness normally participated in the activity and the situation was quickly forgotten by others. Although the children didn't oppose more and were following the choreography in which everyone was singing together and doing the same movements with the right hand, potentially the feeling of belonging was not momentarily present anymore after this episode and from that moment onwards the two children were just performing obedient pupils and belonging.

5 Discussion

The overall aim of this thesis has been to contribute to the contemporary discussion on belonging in school environment by offering an opportunity to see belonging differently.

The research questions were:

1. What kind of belongings and non-belongings may be produced in the everyday (school) life?
2. How are the social belongings and non-belongings produced in the everyday (school) life?

Often when belonging has been researched in school context, its fluidity has been forgotten. In this study belonging is understood as a dynamic feeling of safety, familiarity and comfort, which is always produced in relation to the environment. The findings are in accordance with this definition and the previous understanding of belonging and nonbelonging as related phenomena (See Juutinen, 2018; Stratigos, 2015; Qvortrup & Qvortrup, 2017). Although the ethnographic observations focused on the social interactions between humans, I also maintained that in addition to feeling belonging to a person, to a group of friends, or to classroom or school community, it is also possible to feel belonging to culture and to the material world. In this study, I argue that these multiple belongings intersect with each other and are co-dependent. Secondly, the research aimed to make visible different often naturalized, and therefore nonpolitical, processes in which multiple belongings (and simultaneously non-belongings) are produced in the lives of children. On the basis of my research outcomes I argue that multiple belongings are produced partly on the foundation of material, spatial and cultural routines, but achieving belonging in fleeting moments requires personal willingness and agency.

With ethnographic approach and thinking with theory I was able to identify seven (7) dimensions of belongings: *social, ethical, cultural, material, spatial, physical* and *temporal* dimensions of belonging. All of them included *emotional* and *political* dimension in line with my definition of belonging. The formed categories are quite well in line with Sumsion's and Wong's (2011) analytic model's ways of belonging. The difference was that possibly due to the young age of the research participants, the venue of the observations being a Finnish comprehensive school and my decision of not interviewing the children, I wasn't able to identify spiritual, moral or legal belongings. However, in addition to the ways of belonging presented in the analytical model, in this classroom belonging had also a temporal aspect as suggested also by May & Muir (2015, p. 9). Temporal dimension of belonging was also among the six dimensions

identified by special needs teacher Riikka Sirkko (2018). In her presentation on the XVII Annual Conference of Youth Studies in Finland Sirkko presented her unpublished research on belonging in which she had explored the ways of belonging through focus group interviews with sixth graders who had studied together for four years. Through discourse analysis and comparison with the analytical model, Sirkko (2018) had identified also social, emotional, physical, spatial, and cultural dimensions in addition to the temporal dimension.

In the literature, it has been proposed that understanding belonging to the fullest degree would require seeing the person as immersed in 'a complex field of entangled cultural, relational and material worlds' (See May, 2013, p. 151). This present study supported the suggestion, as in the classroom *multiple belongings appeared entangled*. Similarly to May's and Muir's (2015) contemplation, also in this study it was challenging to consider one dimension of belonging, without necessarily having to ponder other aspects of belonging as well, as the episode of headphones in 4.1. demonstrated.

Although my research began as a general interest towards multiple sources or ways of belonging, in the process of the research, typically for ethnographic approach, the research interest took a new shape with the generated data and my attention was directed more specifically to the negotiations of social belongings. This was due to practical reasons: those processes had been more visible and audible for me as a researcher than for example grasping when a child might have felt for example sense of physical belonging due to a familiar smell or taste.

On the basis of my research outcomes in the class I argue that *social belongings are partly produced on the foundation of cultural, material and spatial routines of belongings*. The findings on contemporary research on belonging seem to concur. Juutinen (2018) in her research explores the construction of belonging in preschools with younger, 1 to 5 year-old children. She comes to argue that pedagogical practices produce belongings and nonbelongings. Furthermore Juutinen notes that these practices were tightly surrounded with the material world as well as classroom routines and cultural aspects. Even more recently in their research on togetherness at a community level outside school with 4 to 9 year-olds, Hickey-Moody and Willcox (2019) have similarly come to argue that feelings of 'community' and 'belonging' are produced by more-than-human assemblages.

The analyzed data indicated that in this classroom being aware of cultural, material and spatial routines, provided the children with easy ways to interact with peers or adults and construct social belongings like in the case of proud artist Viima, who eagerly presented their snowman

art work to an adult. I was able to notice belongings especially in moments, when there were exceptions to classroom pedagogical routines and the sense of belonging might have been interpreted as being under a threat (See May & Muir, 2015, p. 1). For example when Utu asked the teacher "aren't you going to put the timer on", or when Isse and Syksy weren't able to sit on their own familiar seats that made them feel safe and comfortable.

In this classroom having own assigned and named seats was not only a practical safety issue or an imposed norm or routine. The own seats had become dear to the children. In the earlier research the importance of having own concrete seats in school environment has been highlighted by Maija Lanas (2008). Referring to Hartig & Staats and Korpela and colleagues, Lanas (2008, p. 53) suggests that the link between having a concrete place and wellbeing has been researched at least in the field of environmental psychology, in the studies about restorative places. According to Lanas (2008) in these studies it has been stated that in a need to retreat from stimulation people search for places that give them power. In her research Lanas (2008, pp. 65-66) saw it as a challenge, that the children and teachers of the school had to change their place nearly on every lesson and that they didn't have their own seats. In the analyzed data of this study the assigned seats naturally allowed the children to store their belongings, but I would argue that more importantly, they served as a safe place – or a restorative place - that liberated them from choosing where and with whom to sit and communicate. During the lessons negotiations for belonging happened naturally with the peers whose seats were close by.

While a lot of previous belonging research in schools has focused on identifying practices and structures that would help to nourish pupils' sense of belonging (Allen et al., 2018), the findings of this study suggest that *although the production of social belonging is enabled through structures and practices, it is not achieved through them.* This research calls for keeping in mind child's own agency and respecting it. The difficulty to predict a person's sense of belonging has been suggested by May and Muir (2018). In one of the episodes it clearly seemed that Ennu desired to belong, but simultaneously Ennu also wanted - or at least preferred and chose - to be alone. Stratigos (2015, p. 49) referring to Deleuze and Guattari (2004, p. 26) suggests that 'the traditional logic of desire is all wrong from the very outset' because it 'causes us to look upon it as primarily a lack'. The episode with Ennu invites to keep on mind that it should not be taken for granted that a child wants to participate or belong. The children should have the right to determine whether or not they choose to belong.

While some children are clearly prevented from belonging, there are others that may consciously resist belonging (See May, 2013, p. 88; Probyn, 1996; Stratigos, 2015). Being passive is also taking a stand and it shouldn't be considered as negative or alarming by nature. Instead, belonging should be seen as a dynamic movement (Stratigos, 2015, p. 49). The importance of person's own willingness to belong is also central in the operational definition for inclusion. When Qvortrup & Qvortrup (2017) describe different levels of inclusion, 'total inclusion' is not followed only by spatial inclusion, but self-exclusion has been categorized as equally inclusive. Correspondently, the level from 'total exclusion' towards inclusion is suggested to be 'spatial exclusion' or 'forced inclusion'. In the classroom instead of trying to force the situation, the teacher let the situation flow naturally continuing enabling possibilities to participate for all children in their own ways, because individual's motivation is fueled by the goals of the group's activities (Hännikäinen, 2006, pp. 126–127). Already at the end of the observation period, this chosen path resulted in Ennu happily and voluntarily choosing to join in an improvised outdoor activity together with their peers and potentially experiencing a sense of social belonging in that fleeting moment.

Due to the short observation period the focus of the study was on the belongings that appeared in fleeting moments. On episodes, on the basis of my research outcomes I also argue that *social belongings are produced in the fleeting moments of noticing and leaving unnoticed.* This was illustrated in the episodes with the drawing notebooks, which were used as tools to negotiate social belongings. The negotiation attempts made by some children were accepted while others were purposefully omitted like when Osmi was left out. In other situations, like when the children had been divided into groups for group work Kaino was left unnoticed, most probably by accident and excitement. This reflects how the production of belongings and nonbelongings is often unconscious (May, 2013, p. 129; Yuval-Davis, 2006). However, in contradiction to Juutinen's (2018) observations in day care center with 1 to 5-year-old children, the formed positions in this classroom did not seem to be static. While Juutinen notes that in day care the exclusion concerned mostly one singular child when the educators were not present (Juutinen, 2018), among these first graders the excluded children seemed to be changing and the positions were unfixed. In this classroom it seemed like anybody was able to feel belonging or non-belonging in moments despite the overall situation.

Finally, despite the short observation period and focus on short term processes, also signs of more enduring belongings were perceived for example in form of closer friendships and a child

writing “I <3 mom” all around their notebooks and study books. Therefore, in addition to already mentioned social, ethical, cultural, material, spatial and physical dimensions or sources of belonging, in this study belonging also seemed to be tied to time, more precisely to duration. According to May (2016) there is still little research on the temporal aspect of belonging. In the episodes the duration aspect was the most visible during a lunch conversation in which momentary sense of belongings and non-belongings were simultaneously produced based on previous pre-school attendance.

In the last section I will address myriad issues regarding my awareness of the practical and procedural ethics of carrying out this study.

6 Ethical considerations

The ethical reflections were pertinent throughout the research process starting from the moment of deciding to approach belonging with ethnographic methods. The vulnerability of all potential studies lies in that they need people willing to take part, but simultaneously the research permits must be adequately asked (TENK, 2012). As I had heard that some university students had had challenges finding a classroom in which they could to complete their research, I first approached the principal by asking for an initial unofficial approval. Fortunately they gave me a green light and urged me to go ahead with my research. Then I send an email to two teachers who I knew to be co-teaching the school's 1st graders and I got an immediate response and I was warmly welcomed in their classroom. In this way the official research permits were in order.

According to the ethical principles (TENK, 2019) the fundamental starting point of research with human participants is the participants' trust in researchers and science and trust can only be retained if the human dignity and rights of the people participating in the research are respected by the researcher. One of the central ethical principles is requesting an informed consent to participate, which can be done either orally, in writing, electronically or by other means. As in this research I was observing the children's everyday school life without personal identifiers, according to the guidelines there wouldn't have been a need to ask for the informed consents and informing carers and the children would have been sufficient. However, the teachers had given me a piece of advice, that the letters including the information about the research (appendix) should definitely be sent both electronically and on paper, to receive maximum amount of answers. I considered that as there had been previous challenges in the communication between the homes and the school, it was more ethical to strive to secure the voluntariness of the research and the possibility to refuse to participate, by asking for the permission (compare Strandell, 2000, p. 97).

Due to some technical difficulties in communication with the principal, I was able to ask for the research permission from the school assistant and send the invitation/introduction letters (appendix 1) and permission requests (appendix 2) to the care takers as well as the children themselves only upon arrival to the school. Because according to the ethical principles (TENK, 2019) the research participant must be given sufficient time to consider their decision whether

or not to participate, and to pose any questions they have regarding the research must be answered, I decided to start with ethnographic hanging out as a visitor and begin the official observation that included taking notes only a week afterwards after getting the informed consents.

To ensure that all the care takers would understand my letter, I strived to use easy language. I was assured by the teachers that all the families would have someone who speaks Finnish in their family. However, after the letters were sent, some of the parents expressed, that they felt they had not been provided enough information about the research. Therefore as a response I sent an additional message to all parents with more exact scientific vocabulary including words like 'ethnographic observation'.

In total there were 30 children in the two classrooms. At the end of the first week 26 of the research permission papers were returned, including 25 parent's permissions to participate in the research. The parents who had requested for more information had given their informed consent.

Even if participation in the research requires the approval of the parent or carer, it is not enough. Also minors must primarily give their own consent and the autonomy of minor research participants and the principle of voluntary participation must be respected, irrespective of whether the consent of the parent or carer has been obtained for the research. (TENK, 2019; See also James, 2007, pp. 254-255.) To ensure that all the children would understand, they were told about the research face-to-face. Informing the children about the research and getting their consent does not necessarily make the research ethical. According to the guidelines (TENK, 2019) the research participant also must not feel that participation is compulsory or feel afraid of negative consequences if they refuse to participate in the research. Hence I mentioned many times that participation is voluntary.

However, during the next days when I started to receive the consent papers back, I understood that perhaps the first graders had not understood that they would need to 'tick' the box if they wanted to participate in the research. Therefore I felt like I had to go around the children who had not ticked the box asking whether or not they had wanted to participate. Most of them smiled and said yes, pointing to their signature. However, out of 25 children whose parents had given the permission, two children had decided not to give their informed consent although their parents had given one. Therefore finally I wrote field notes on 23 children. The encountering with one of the children made me reflect on the ethical dimensions of participant recruitment more intensively than others.

Today one of children returned the research permission paper that their parents had signed, stating that they (the child) would not give me permission to make observatory notes on their actions. I thanked the child for having returned the paper anyway and commented intentionally calmly with a smile on my face that everyone has the right to choose whether or not they want to participate. The child looked at me for a while in silence and then asked if other children had given me the permission. I answered that luckily many of them had and with the intention of supporting the child's already made decision I added that I would be able to do my final assignment for my studies. The child looked at me with a curious look and asked if everyone has to do a final assignment, to which I answered that at least all the students who want to become a teacher, like I do, would have to make one. After hearing this, without saying a word the child walked away, shortly afterwards returning with a pencil inquiring where they could write their name to give the permission.

Field journal 20.11.2019

As TENK (2019) suggests, in research with human participants, ethical questions focus on the interaction between researcher and research participant, in this case approximately a 6 to 7 -year-old child. These interactions often involve unpredictable factors, and there is not always one single clearly correct solution to ethical questions. However, after this short moment I had noted that I had felt confused. I had tried to act according to the guidelines, but the short moment had made me wonder: on what basis had these children decided to participate or not participate? Had there been peer pressure? Perhaps pressure from home? Some of the children even came to tell me that they would have wanted to participate although their parent hadn't allowed it. Olli (2019, p. 116) referring to Walsh ponders that for children asking for consent offers an unusual experience, because they get to be in the position in which an adult asks them for their consent. It is possible that being in a new situation and having the power to decide had affected the decision making? Potentially some of the children had given the permission just because I had seemed nice to them, because I had said that it was for my studies or because they thought I might prefer them to say yes. After I got to know the child from the previous episode a little bit better, I assume that they just wanted to test my reaction. However, the little test provided me with some deep reflections on research ethics.

It is not generally appropriate to publish the data of people who have participated in the research in a way that allows them to be identified. Therefore I made all my notes anonymously and the school or the municipality of the school were not revealed. In my notes I call both of the teachers as the teacher. For the children I have created pseudonyms, because it made it easier to follow especially some of the episodes. However, even providing anonymity for the participants does not necessarily prevent their identification by some people who are familiar with the classroom (TENK, 2019). Hence, I have carefully chosen the data extracts that I present in this research, to protect the anonymity of the children if considered necessary to prevent any harm or risk.

7 Conclusive thoughts

The starting point of this study was my bachelor's thesis in which I widely explored literature on belonging. My aim had been to understand what belonging is, why it is so meaningful and what could be done to nurture pupils' sense of belonging. In the literature belonging appeared as an ambiguous yet desirable concept and its preconditions had been widely explored. However, because of interests to measure it, sense of belonging had been simplified in the process and it had suddenly become as a static state that didn't manage to describe the reality. I became inspired to explore the essence of belonging as a dynamic feeling.

In this master's thesis research I have explored children's multiple and dynamic belongings in the everyday school life. The significance of this study lies in that it binds together academic articles about belonging from different fields of study and connects them to everyday school life examples to make them more easily approachable for educators. The findings were generated through participating in the everyday school life of a Finnish first grade for two weeks taking notes on my observations. The main findings are in accordance with the studied literature in which belonging and nonbelonging are seen as related phenomena. However, in Finnish educational context belonging has mainly been explored in preschool context, so the study brings the academic discussion to the context of Finnish basic education.

The research process was really meaningful for me and there were two key takeaways. First of all, during fieldwork I gradually developed my ability to listen attentively to children both during our conversations and their conversations with each other. As a researcher I strived to develop a determination not to let myself be interrupted by anyone or anything else until a child had completed what he or she wanted me to see or hear, which is something that a teacher rarely is able to do, due to other responsibilities. I suppose that, from the children's point of view, this demonstrated my genuine interest to learn and understand about their everyday life although it was difficult to use these accounts, as I struggled to listen and write at the same time.

Another big takeaway was definitely thinking about the everyday life with theory. Although I acknowledge that the analysis could have been done in various ways, I believe focusing only on certain characteristics of belonging was finally a good decision for the clarity of this thesis. I am also grateful that I did not end up overanalyzing the generated data, because I was left with a curiosity and motivation to continue thinking with theory also in the working life as an ever-

developing educational professional. However, I present that in future research it might be interesting to analyze the belongings and nonbelongings at least with the concepts of performativity and power on mind. As the children were so young and new to the school's operational culture, there were huge differences between the moments when a teacher was present and when they weren't. The children seemed to be performing the role of a pupil and belonging to the classroom operational culture. Also negotiations of power were visible in many of the episodes of the generated data that I finally decided to leave out of this research basing the analysis on the chosen theoretical framework due to time constraints.

There are several limitations of this study. The first limitation, and possibly the most remarkable one, is that studies on children's belonging should not be confined to the world of the school (See e.g. James, 2007, p. 254). For children, life happens both inside and outside school and what happens outside school is also important for school life. Where the child lives and what they do in their spare time seemed to have a significance for, for example, their energy levels and the friendships that were formed in school. Although observations were done only in educational environments, also outside school aspect of belonging were acknowledged and even observed. Similarly to the preschoolers (Juutinen, 2018) also the first graders of this study produced belongings also outside of school context with their friends, families, extended families and outside school communities.

The second limitation was, that the data generated during the observation period was not as rich as it could have been and therefore it doesn't allow the reader to dive in the school world as deeply as it could. This is partly due to short observation period combined with the researcher skills of observation and taking notes that were developing throughout the research process. Moreover, after the observation period was over, I came to question my decision of not having assumed the gender of the children. Thinking it back, the children seemed to identify themselves within the binary system and gender had probably played an important role on some of the negotiations. In this light, I believe I might have exaggerated the necessary measures for securing the anonymity of the children in this case and the decision resulted in shallower description. However, despite these considerations, the generated data consisted of an array of interesting moments of everyday life in school and it was rich enough to answer my research questions. In the future research, I would certainly consider giving the children a more central role, for example in taking observatory notes like Hohti (2016) did with third graders.

I will finish the master's thesis with an episode that has intrigued me throughout the research process. By finishing this ethnographic research I feel like I have turned the full circle and I couldn't be more ready to continue dreaming and step by step fulfilling those new dreams. Let the episode serve as a reminder that we are creating the reality on a daily basis.

> *A child raises their hand and eyes wide open asks "Does an elf exist?" At least five children firmly affirm in unison: "Yes!". After having heard the clear answer from the peers the child continues to look at us adults with a confused look to confirm the received message, but none of us say anything. In the silence, the story about the elves suddenly becomes the truth.*

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Appendices

Appendix A TUTKIMUSLUPAHAKEMUS 1/2

6.11.2019

Rehtori XX

XX peruskoulu

Arvoisa Rehtori XX

Olen Intercultural Teacher Education –linjan luokanopettajaopiskelija Oulun yliopistosta ja teen pro gradu -tutkielmaani liittyen kuulumiseen koulun arjessa. Haen tutkimuslupaa XX peruskoulun, [teacher 1] & [teacher 2] opettaman 1-luokan osallistumiselle tutkimukseeni.

Pro graduni ohjaajana toimii tutkijatohtori Maija Lanas (maija.lanas@oulu.fi) Oulun yliopistosta. Tutkielmani tarkoituksena on havainnoimalla selvittää, miten monenlaista kuulumista koulussa voi olla. Tutkimuksen tuloksia voidaan hyödyntää käytännön kasvatustyön kehittämisessä.

Tarkoitukseni on kerätä aineisto 18.11-29.11.2019 välisenä aikana. Aineiston keruuseen tarvitsen 1-2 viikkoa. Tutkimusraportin pyrin saamaan valmiiksi alkuvuodesta 2020.

Tutkijana sitoudun noudattamaan tietosuojalainsäädäntöön liittyviä ohjeita. Lasten osallistuminen tutkimukseen on vapaaehtoista. Aineiston keruu ja tutkimuksen raportointi eivät tule tuottamaan haittaa tai vahinkoa lasten koulunkäynnille. Lapsen anonymiteetin säilymisen turvaan kaikissa tutkimukseni vaiheissa. Aineiston kerättyäni ja analysoituani tuhoan kaikki dokumentit.

Tutkimukseni kokonaisvaltaisina lähestymistapoina ovat etnografia ja kerronnallisuus. Tutkin kuulumisen moninaisuutta havainnoinnin ja havainnointipäiväkirjan avulla.

Toivon Teidän vastaavan hakemukseeni 14.11.2019 mennessä.
Jos tarvitsette lisätietoa tutkimukseeni liittyen, voitte olla yhteydessä minuun tai ohjaajaani.

Oulussa 6.11.2019
Ystävällisin terveisin,
Pro gradun tekijä Anu Roiha, [contact details]

TUTKIMUSLUPAHAKEMUS 2/2

6.11.2019

Anu Roiha hakee tutkimuslupaa XX peruskoulun 1. luokan oppilaiden osallistumiselle pro gradu–tutkielmaan.

Tutkimuslupa myönnetään _____

Tutkimuslupaa ei myönnetä _____

Paikka: _____ Aika: ____/____/2019

Allekirjoitus: _____

Rehtori XX

Appendix B

TUTKIMUSLUPA LAPSELLE JA HUOLTAJALLE

Lapsen nimi:_____ Ikä:_____

Lapsen huoltajan lupa:

☐ Annan tutkijalle luvan käyttää **lastani koskevia muistiinpanoja** tutkimusraportissaan (nimettömästi)

Paikka: _____ Aika: ____/____/2019

Lapsen huoltajan allekirjoitus: _____

Perheissä, joissa tarvitaan kahden huoltajan suostumus:

Paikka: _____ Aika: ____/____/2019

Lapsen huoltajan allekirjoitus: _____

Lapsen lupa:

☐ Minun tekemisiäni ja puheitani saa kirjoittaa ylös.

Paikka: _____ Aika: ____/____/2019

Lapsen allekirjoitus: _____

Appendix C

TIEDOTE
TUTKIMUS 1.-LUOKKASSA
HYVÄT EKALUOKKALAISET JA HUOLTAJAT
KUKA OLET?
Olen Anu. Opiskelen Oulun yliopistolla ja minusta tulee opettaja.
MITÄ TEET?
Tällä hetkellä teen viimeistä koulutehtävääni. Sitä kutsutaan pro gradu –tutkielmaksi. Olen kiinnostunut koulun arjesta ja erityisesti siitä, miten monenlaista kuulumista koulussa voi olla.
MIKSI KIRJOITAT MEILLE?
[redacted] ja [redacted] opettajat sekä [redacted] -rehtori ovat antaneet minulle luvan seurata ekaluokkalaisten arkea kahden viikon ajan. Nyt pyydän teiltä lupaa tehdä muistiinpanoja tilanteissa, joissa lapsi on mukana ja hyödyntää niitä tutkimuksessani.
MITÄ ON HYVÄ TIETÄÄ?
Osallistuminen ei haittaa lasten koulunkäyntiä.
Lasten osallistuminen tutkimukseen on vapaaehtoista, mutta toivottavaa.
Koulupäivien aikana katselen ja kuuntelen koulun arkea ja kirjoitan havainnoistani vihkooni.
Kirjoitan tutkimuksestani raportin, jonka avulla osallistun sekä kansainväliseen keskusteluun kuulumisesta että koulujen käytäntöjen kehittämiseen.
Raportissa en mainitse lasten, opettajien, luokan, koulun enkä paikkakunnan nimiä.
Teillä on oikeus peruuttaa lupa milloin vain ilmoittamalla siitä minulle.
Tutkimusraportin julkaisun jälkeen tutkimusaineistoa ei voi enää poistaa.
TUTKIMUSLUPAPYYNTÖ TULEE KOTEIHIN LAPSEN MUKANA.
Toivon, että palautatte sen koululle mahdollisimman pian. Ottakaa rohkeasti yhteyttä, jos haluatte tietää tutkimuksesta enemmän!
Photo
Ystävällisin terveisin,
Anu Roiha
Contact details
Ohjaajanani toimii tutkijatohtori Maija Lanas
Oulun yliopistosta.